

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 00167 01 OF 02 112207Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 /059 W
-----121953 112218Z /15

P R 111514Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5211
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 0167

DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO

PANCANAL FOR IO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PN
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

FOLLOWING FROM USIS/PANAMA 111513Z JAN 78 SENT ACTION USINFO
WASHDC INFO SECSTATE WASHDC REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO:

QUOTE UNCLAS

MEDIA REACTION

E.O. 11652: N/A

1-PANAMA CITY.--(MEDIA REACTION TO RECENT CODELS) NEWS COVERAGE
OF CODELS BAKER, BENTSEN AND GOLDWATER WAS BOTH AMPLE AND
OBJECTIVE WITH PAGE ONE PHOTOS EACH DAY OF VISIT. NO CODEL IN
RECENT YEARS HAS MATCHED THE SHEER VOLUME OF COLUMN INCHES
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DEDICATED TO THE BAKER GROUP WITH ITS THREE PRESS CONFERENCES
AND PACKED PROGRAM OF NEWSWORTHY ACTIVITIES. SENATORS BENTSEN
AND GOLDWATER ALSO RECEIVED THEIR SHARE OF FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE
THOUGH THEIR VISITS WERE OVERSHADOWED IN THE PRESS BY THE
LARGER CODEL BAKER.

2-COMMENTARY ON THE VISITS HAS BEEN MIXED. INITIAL POSITIVE

REACTION COMPLIMENTED VISITORS, EVEN THOSE OPPOSING TREATY, FOR THEIR GOOD JUDGEMENT IN MAKING THE TRIP TO LEARN THE FACTS FIRST-HAND. THE WARM WELCOME STARTED TO WEAR THIN, HOWEVER, WHEN THE SENATORS BEGAN TALKING OF CHANGING THE TREATIES.

3-ON JANUARY 4 BOTH GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MORNINGS DEVOTED LEAD EDITS TO CODEL BAKER. TABLOID CRITICA FOCUSED ITS ATTENTION ON SENATOR BAKER, "A PARLAMENTARIAN OF RECOGNIZED INTELLECTUAL AND ETHICAL STATURE" WHO WAS VISITING PANAMA AT THE PERSONAL INVITATION OF GENERAL TORRIJOS AND WHO WOULD SURELY "MODIFY HIS STAND TOWARD RATIFICATION, (WHICH WOULD) CARRY WITH IT THE VOTES OF SEVERAL INDECISIVE REPUBLICAN SENATORS..."

4-MATUTINO OF JANUARY 4 WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC, SAYING THAT THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO THINK OF THE "CRUCIAL" VOTE AS BELONGING TO THE SENATE ARE MISTAKEN "BECAUSE THE DECISIVE, DEFINITIVE, PERMANENT AND IRREVERSIBLE VOTE WAS THE ONE PANAMA TOOK OCTOBER 23, 1977..." MAUTINO CONCLUDED ON A SKEPTICAL NOTE PREDICTING THAT EVEN IF BAKER WERE TO RETURN WITH "AN IDEOLOGICAL INCLINATION DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THE MEMBERS OF THE MINORITY COULD EXPECT, THEY WILL ACCUSE HIM OF HAVING REACHED HIS OPINION FOR REASONS OTHER THAN A SERIOUS ANALYSIS OR A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUTH... (BECAUSE) "THERE ARE SECTORS IN THE U.S. IMPERVIOUS TO REASON..."

5-CRITICA ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF AMENDMENTS ON JAN. 6 AFTER THE UNCLASSIFIED

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FIRST CODEL BAKER MEETING WITH TORRIJOS IN FARALLON AND THE PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE GENERAL'S RESIDENCE IN WHICH BAKER OPENLY PREDICTED THE FAILURE OF THE TREATY AS IS AND TORRIJOS SPOKE OF HIS "FLEXIBILITY" AND OF HIS NOT BEING "DOGMATIC." "ON (THAT) POINT WE THINK THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED WITH THE GREATEST CAUTION. AMENDMENTS UNILATERALLY MADE BY THE U.S. SENATE INVOLVE NEW TREATIES REQUIRING ANOTHER PLEBISCITE AS REQUIRED BY THE CONSTITUTION. WE UNDERSTAND GENERAL TORRIJOS' FLEXIBILITY AND THE RESPECT THE SENATORY' OPINION MERITS. . . BUT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS ALREADY CONSIDERED THAT BEYOND THE POINTS OF INTERPRETATION AGREED ON IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH TORRIJOS THERE IS NOTHING TO ADD OR SUBTRACT FROM THE TREATIES. . .THE POLITICAL CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN HONORABLY COMPLIED WITH BY THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE AND ANY POSSIBILITY OF RENEGOTIATIONS CARRIES WITH IT GRAVE CONSEQUENCES IN SPITE OF THE GOOD FAITH OF SENATOR HOWARD BAKER..."

6-A MOVEMENT TOWARD A MUCH MORE CRITICAL VIEW OF THE SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS FOLLOWED IN THE JANUARY 6 AND 7 EDITIONS. CRITICA'S POLITICAL GOSSIP COLUMN, "FROM THE COFFEE SHOP," COMPLAINED THAT "WITH THE LONG PARADE OF SENATORS PANAMANIAN HAVE ACQUIRED A ZOO COMPLEX, BECAUSE THIS THING OF EVERYONE COMING HERE TO

INVESTIGATE US, TO LOOK AT US AND TO OBSERVE US AND ABOVE ALL
TO ASK US STUPID QUESTIONS, IS GETTING BORING." THIS COMMENT
WAS FOLLOWED THE NEXT DAY IN THE SAME PAPER IN THE "STEPPING
ON CORNS" COLUMN BY MARIO MARTINEZ WITH AN ANGRY PIECE IN
CRITICA'S BEST PRE-TREATY SIGNING LANGUAGE. "SOMETIMES WE THINK
THAT SOME AMERICANS UNDERESTIMATE THE PANAMANIAN CAPACITY TO
FIGHT. IT OCCURS TO US THAT EVERY TIME THEY SUGGEST CHANGES TO
A TREATY, ... THEY ARE SPITTING ON THE DIGNITY OF THE FATHERLAND;
BECAUSE ONE THING IS TO NEGOTIATE AND ANOTHER IS TO SELL OUT...
TO ASK THIS PEOPLE TO ACCEPT MORE MODIFICATIONS...IS ABSURD,
SHOWING A LACK OF RESPECT TOWARD ALL PANAMANIAN WHO WOULD PREFER
TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROS DOOR OF SACRIFICE BEFORE BOWING THEIR
HEADS TO PICK UP CRUMBS...MARTINEZ CONCLUDES: "WHAT DO THEY WANT
NOW? AFTER THE BITTER DRAFT, AFTER THE PURGATIVE, THESE SENATORS
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WANT TO OPEN OUR STOMACHS TO MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE TAKEN OUR
MEDICINE?"

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5212
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 0167

DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO

PANCANAL FOR IO

7-WELL-KNOWN COLUMNIST LUIS RESTREPO RETURNS TO HIS EQUALLY WELL-KNOWN YANKEE BAITING STYLE FOR HIS JANUARY 7 PIECE IN MATUTINO, "NO TO AMENDMENTS*" "IT IS CLEAR," SAYS RESTREPO, "WITHOUT ANY DOUBT THAT COLONIALIST BLACKMAIL HAS BEEN THE ONLY MOTIVE FOR THE MOVEMENT TOWARD OUR COUNTRY OF SO MANY TENS OF SENATORIAL INVESTIGATORS. THEY ARRIVE HERE ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION LIKE CONQUISTADORS AND ARE RECEIVED THE SAME WAY. THEY THEN THINK THEY HAVE THE FULL RIGHT TO ASSUME POSITIONS THAT TRULY HAVE BEEN RESENTED BY MANY PANAMANIAN. . . THEY ARRIVED BEATING THEIR CHESTS IN A FORM OF GREETING WHILE THEY RECITED THEIR DEMOCRATIC AND HUMAN RIGHTIST HAIL MARY'S . . . (WHILE INSISTING THAT PANAMA) ACCEPT EXTENSIVE MODIFICATIONS INCLUDING ARMED INTERVENTION IN PANAMA WHICH IS CONSIDERED A DIVINE RIGHT OF THE NATION OF THE NORTH."

8-AS FOR "FLEXIBILITY," RESTREPO ADDS: "THE POLICY OF FLEXIBILITY ENDED WHEN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS ENDED. A DOCUMENT NOW EXISTS, UNCLASSIFIED

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DULY REGISTERED IN THE ANNALS OF HISTORY, WHICH CARRIES WITH IT THE RESPONSIBILITY AND THE RESPECT OF THE SIGNATORY NATIONS. THAT SHOULD BE, MUST BE, THE NATIONAL POSITION BEFORE THE PRZTENTIONS OF THOSE WHO ARRIVE IN OUR COUNTRY TO INVESTIGATE US AND LATER DICTATE WHAT THEY CANHOR CANNOT GIVE US."

9-A MORE MODERATE VIEW WAS EXPRESSED BY CHANNEL TWO NEWS DIRECTOR MARIO VZLASQUEZ. ACCORDING TO VELASQUEZ IN A JANUARY 5 COMMENTARY, "IT MIGHT EVEN BE ADVISABLE TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF AMENDING THE TREATY TO CLARIFY CONCEPTS AND TO FIX ITS SCOPE, NOT ONLY TO CONTRIBUTE TO ITS RATIFICATION BUT--INSOFAR AS PANAMA IS CONCERNED--TO REDUCE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THE CONFUSION SURROUNDING ITS INTERPRETATION. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE BORNE VERY MUCH IN MIND THAT OPENING THE WAY TO POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS WOULD BE A VERY ANGEROUS GAME FOR PANAMA, BECAUSE IT COULD OPEN THE DOOR TO AN AVALANCE OF AMENDMENTS AND REFORMS BY THE SENATORS, WHICH WOULD DISFIGURE THE TORRIJOS-CARTER TREATIES." ITEM UNQUOTE
JORDEN

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